

June 21, 2004

Dear Editor,

William Raspberry (RG, 6/21/2004) wonders what Jews, Buddhists, atheists or other non-Christians are afraid of, by having the government promote or support the official inclusion of Christian beliefs into the daily lives of our children by the claim that "finding myself in a Muslim country at prayer time does not put me under any pressure whatever to subscribe to Islam." As an adult tourist, he might well feel that way, though as a child growing up in a theocracy, I think it is possible that a different experience is more likely. In fact, for American public school children to feel pressure to say the Pledge in class or to join a Christian prayer circle during after school sports, theater or other performance activities does not require government endorsement (teacher and peer pressure is enough for that), but overt promotion by the state, has already and will certainly exacerbate the situation for children of religious minorities in the future.

Raspberry also asks, "Does any of this imply that atheists, pantheists or secular humanists cannot expect fair treatment, either as citizens or as plaintiffs before the court?" Consider the words of a recent former president and then ask yourself if we have nothing to worry about: "I don't know that atheists should be considered citizens, nor should they be considered patriots. This is one nation under God." -George Bush Sr.

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